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Select Tale.

From *Friendship's Offering*.
THE ORPHAN—A COUNTRY TALE.
BY THE HON. MRS. NORTON.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

[CONCLUDED.]

The orphan leant weeping against the iron rail work as these thoughts passed through her mind, and it was not till the chill evening dew reminded her of the lateness of the hour, that with a hurried step she proceeded onwards. There was a stile at some little distance, which she must cross; the rest of her road lying entirely among fields and lanes. As she approached it, a figure which she instantly recognized as James Somers, jumped from it. "Oh! Mary, dear," said the young man hastily, "how late you are! I have been waiting an hour and more at this stile, which I knew you must pass, to walk the rest of the way with you; and how you have been crying! but no wonder, for poor Jessie and you were always as fond as sisters." There was a long pause; and as Mary leant on his arm, she mentally contrasted his kindness in waiting for her, with the parting which had just taken place. James Somers interrupted her reflections with the words, "And yet you know you are not her sister, Mary."

"No," said the orphan faintly.

"Nor nor mine," added the young man hesitatingly.

"No, James, nor yours; I know I belong to no one; but don't remind me of it just now," and the choking tears again rose to her swollen eyes.

He pressed her arm closer to his heart, and again for a few steps there was silence. Then speaking very hurriedly, he said—"but it is now, at this time of all others, that I would remind you of it, Mary; because I will say now, what I have often wished to say before, and dare not, though there was neither sin nor shame in it; and that is, that I love you better than ever brother loved sister, better than father or mother; for than the whole world; better than the life itself! Don't tremble so, dear Mary; and lean on me still. I do not wish to wring any promise from you just now, when you are so sorry to leave us all; I know it may be many years before I can claim you for a wife; but I tell you this because you are going among strangers, that you may think of me, not as merely as a brother, but as one who would wish to marry you, you may ask your heart whether they can love you, or you them, as we love who have spent our lives together."

The orphan returned to rest that evening—the first evening of dependence on strangers—the first evening from all her friends, with a deep and entire sense of happiness, such as she had never before experienced. That James Somers, the lively, handsome, affectionate, James Somers, the favorite of the village, the brother who most resembled Jessie, should love her better than father or mother, better than life itself, seemed wonderful, incomprehensible. That there should be one being to whom she was all in all, the hope looked forward to for years to come—the image which made labor light to her soul—oh! it was more than she had deserved from Heaven; and when the orphan knelt that night before the throne of grace, in the purity of her heart, she thanked God for the words James had spoken.

All went on smoothly; and the quarterly earnings of the two girls, were, with very slight deductions, regularly deposited with Mrs. Somers, during the first year. Mary's mistress declared that her caps had never been crimped so neatly, her work never done so well; herself never waited on so cheerfully, as since the orphan came to live with her. She was not treated as a servant, but remained constantly with Mrs. Benson, that as the old lady expressed it, "the sight of her face, and the sound of her voice might cheer her heart."

Jessie, too, had given satisfaction; for she was not contented with her place; the housekeeper, she said, was cross, the other dairy maid overbearing and officious; and she willingly accepted an offer made by a lady who had spent some time at the Park on a visit, to enter her family as waiting maid to two very spoiled and lovely children, who had taken a fancy to her during their stay. This lady was in very bad health, and on her way to London, where she intended to fix her residence, in order to be under the care of the first physicians; and, as Mrs. Somers reproached Jessie for having engaged herself to leave them all without consulting her or her mother, but Jessie was determined to go to London she went, and at the end of the quarter, wrote in high spirits to her mother, to whom she transmitted four guineas, her wages. The next account was less pleasant; her mis-

ress was dead—her master gone to Paris on business; and what with mourning and other expenses, she could send only one guinea home. Her third letter arrived just as her anxious parents were reasoning on the probability of her being ill, as the cause of her long silence. It was written in low spirits, with an affection of levity which struck painfully on the hearts of the circle at the farm;—it contained no remittance, but she expressed a hope of being able to send money in a few days, "as every one who comes to the house," said she, "gives me something; I suppose for the pleasure of looking at me; for I do nothing in the family, except to dress and address the young ladies."

She concluded by complaining that her wages were never regularly paid, as before her mistress died; so that she was often more in debt than she was aware before she could receive them; and that the new housekeeper was a very fine lady, who insisted on Jessie's dressing smartly, and keeping up a genteel appearance before company. Farmer Somers did little that day but persevere and re-peruse the letter of his beautiful and wayward Jessie; and after much consideration he wrote to her, a peremptory command to leave her place and return home. Had that letter been sent, much misery might have been spared to him—to all—but as the farmer raised his eyes from the finished page, they lit on her accustomed seat; in an instant the sound of her laugh, the expression of her beaming brow, the bounding step with which she used to meet him, flashed across his soul—he read his mandate to her, and it appeared stern, cruel; he had apportioned the severity of his language more to the magnitude of her temptation than the faultiness of her conduct; why should he speak harsh words to his child?—why should he issue a command to her who would obey his wishes? He tore up his first letter and wrote another, in which his natural anxiety was so mingled with the outpourings of his awakened tenderness, that Jessie might, perhaps, be excused, when she wrote home that she feared her not being able to send more money had induced her father and mother to think she was disadvantageously placed; she aspired that they were misa-ken; that she would not leave her place for the world; and finally, she enclosed four pounds as a proof that the inability, on the two last occasions, was entirely accidental.

Poor Jessie! it was her last remittance home. The year rolled round; Christmas came, but no letter or word from London cheered the hearts of the party at the farm. Impatiently they waited all the first spring quarter was at an end, and kind letters were written at intervals to assure her that they merely wished for a line to gladden them, to say she was in health, and remembered them all. They told her how prosperously the farm went on, and with the delicacy that is born of affection, magnified the improvement in their situation that she might feel less painfully, (what they never doubted caused her reluctance to write) her inability to assist them with money. Still no tidings were received; and at length one of Mary's letters was returned to her, with the post office mark; no such person as Jessie Somers to be found! Mrs. Benson herself accompanied the orphan to the house of her adopted father, to communicate this distressing intelligence; and advised him instantly to write to Jessie's mother, and leave whether the unhappy girl was gone. He wrote, and another letter, Frank, slept, and scarcely spoke, till the few lines of reply were handed him. They were as follows:

"Sir—I have made all due inquiry respecting the young person of the name of Somers, from my housekeeper, and find that she was discharged from service for a theft committed on one of my daughters; and that no one in the house knows her present abode."

The letter covered his face, and with a wild hysterical laugh, sank back in his chair, from which he was lifted to bed by his son and wife; and there for eight days he remained utterly unconscious of the presence of those around him; and talking incoherently of righting his child

and punishing those who had slandered her name. At length the fever left him, and he turned to his wife and Mary, who were watching by his bed side, and said—"I feel well again—well in body; and I shall go instantly to London to find my girl! No entreaties to delay—but a few days till she should in some measure recover her strength, could move him. He set off alone, resolved, as he said, to come back with his Jessie, or never to return to the home that she had clouded with shame."

From the housekeeper who had turned Jessie away, Farmer Somers learnt all the circumstances which had condemned her. She had been observed measuring a quantity of fine lace which belonged to the dress of one of the little girls; she had washed it, and on the housekeeper inquiring why the child's frock was not trimmed, she replied that it was not dry, and that it should be put on the next day. The housekeeper observing that she was much embarrassed during her answer, took particular notice of the way in which the young ladies were dressed during the two following days; and at length insisted on Jessie's producing the lace. The girl then burst into tears, and declared she could not, that she had lost it immediately after having hung it to dry, and that she was convinced some one had stolen it. At the same time she offered to replace it out of her year's wages. "This the housekeeper peremptorily refused; it was old family lace, and it was necessary that some inquiry should be made immediately in the matter of its disappearance. All the servants were called into one room, and their boxes searched. In Jessie's box, a remnant of the lace was discovered, carefully concealed in the sleeve of a gown; and her passionate protestations and vehement denial of treachery on the part of some one in the house, her proud defiance to the housekeeper to prove her guilt, inclined all to suspect her truth. After much trouble a pawnbroker was discovered in the neighborhood, with the remnant of the lace in his possession. He voluntarily stated that a young girl had pawned it at his shop a week previous; that the circumstance made a particular impression on his mind, from the fact of its being damp as if lately washed. Of the girl he knew nothing; she spoke in a very low voice, did not appear agitated in the least, had a quantity of beautiful hair dressed in long dark curls on each side of her face, and wore a deep bonnet with a blue ribbon around it. There was a general murmur among her fellow servants, for there was no one in the house with hair like Jessie's, or who wore the same sort of lace. She was desired to put on her bonnet and shawl, and the pawnbroker was asked whether he recognized her as the young person who had pawned the lace. He refused to speak positively, on account of his being dusk at the time, but thought she was the same person; and produced a pocket handkerchief which she had dropped in leaving the shop, with the initials J. S. in the corner. On seeing this, the startled servant girl, who had been lying down on the bed, and begged to be left alone. About an hour afterwards the housekeeper went to her room to inform her that in consideration of all the lace having been recovered, and the pawnbroker refusing to swear to her person, as well as from mercy to her youth and previous respectability, she would not be prosecuted for the theft, but must instantly quit the house, and her things would be sent to her. The frantic sorrow of the little girl whose loss was the cause of Jessie's disgrace, had also some weight in this decision, as the child was very delicate, and an idol with her father, whose absence on the continent left the housekeeper at liberty to do as she pleased on the occasion. But Jessie was no where to be found, nor did she ever return, or send for the few things

she could call her own.

After vainly endeavoring to obtain some clue to the abode of his wretched daughter—and publishing an advertisement, that "if J. S. would return to her parents and native village, all should be forgotten and forgiven,"—the heartbroken father returned home. From that day, according to his wife's mode of expressing it, "he never held his head up." He did nothing on the farm; but sat with folded arms on the seat opposite Jessie's empty place, repeating—"I made an idol of her, and God has punished me—God has punished me!" But for the unremitting exertions of his son, Farmer Somers would have been utterly ruined.

Very early one morning in May, the orphan awoke lightly at the farm house door, which was opened by the worn and weary form of Mrs. Somers. Mother, said she in a low voice, Mrs. Benson is going to London for three days, and I come to tell you this, and wish you good bye. Mrs. Somers looked on her fair open brow, and the tears rose to her eyes. "God bless you, my child," said she, "and keep you from harm, though it is but three days you have to spend in that world of sin." And the heavy sigh that burst from her heart, showed which of her thoughts had wandered. "Who knows, mother," said the orphan after a pause, "whether I may not hear something of her." A painful smile quivered round the mouth of her adopted mother; and she shook her head without answering. Mary kissed her, and turned away without asking for Farmer Somers, for she knew that her visit would scarcely be missed, and that his whole soul was wrapt up in the contemplation of Jessie's loss.

The Sabbath day was the second after Mrs. Benson's arrival in town and the servant of the lady with whom she was staying, proposed to Mary that they should attend divine service at Westminster Abbey, which she assured the orphan was "grandier than any thing she could see in a dream." Permission was easily obtained, and they walked together through St. James Park. "How sweet and quiet every thing is," said Mary as she looked upwards and caught glimpses of the early sun through the fresh foliage of trees. "And how beautiful the light is upon those large white houses—oh! surely London is a glorious place! but surely," added she, after a pause, "what a crowd of people huddled together; they are not going to church; they are not moving; something dreadful must have happened!"

"Oh! nothing has happened," said her companion carelessly; "it is only some drunken people they are trying to move away."

"Drunk!" said Mary, with amazement; "at this hour of the morning, and on the Sabbath day!" and she felt that the weakness of London surprised even what she imagined. "She turned her head again to the group—and her sudden gasp for breath was followed by a piercing shriek."

"What is the matter, for heaven's sake!" said the startled servant girl.

"Oh, help me—save me!" murmured Mary, as she clung beseechingly to her companion. "It is Jessie! poor Jessie! and she is on the ground lying."

"Don't—don't," said the girl—don't go near them; it can't be any one you know, it is some poor wicked wretch; and there are all sorts of people and soldiers round her—don't go—pray don't!"

But Mary heard nothing—she nothing but Jessie lying; and in a minute more she was on the spot, and kneeling by the body.

"Come, get up and go home, and don't lie there to make a disturbance in the park," gruffly remonstrated a man who had held of Jessie's arm.

"I won't stir, I won't—I came here and I'll stay as long as I please—I won't!" and the last word was followed with a scream so shrill as to make every one pause, and look round who was passing within any distance.

Let me speak to her—let me lift her," said Mary, who had shrunk trembling with whom she was more immediately in contact.

"Don't go near her—she's dead drunk,"

said one of the soldiers.

"I'm not drunk!" screamed the girl, while the blue veins in her temples and throat swelled almost to bursting: "I'm not drunk—and I'm not a thief, though they make me out one—and I'll not stir, I won't!"

"Oh!" said the orphan, sobbing bitterly, let me go near her—she's dying—you're suffocating her. Oh! ask them to make way for me," continued she, suddenly grasping the arm of a soldier who stood like his comrade gazing on the scene; "do and heaven bless you! do it! it's Jessie! it's my sister!" and in her agony she finished the country girl leant her brow on the arm she held, with hysterical sobs.

"Make way, make way," said the young man, the flash of sudden pity rising to his face; "don't you see her heart is breaking, poor thing?"

"Ah! she's another of the same sort!" said some one in the crowd; as they said, they made way for her to pass; but a deep silence fell upon them when they beheld the meeting of the two sisters. Mary knelt down, and uttered in a low voice a single word—it was the wretched girl's name; but that single word and the voice in which it was uttered, worked like a magic spell. Jessie rose with a weak wailing cry; her shabby bonnet and torn cap fell from her head, and the long dark hair, of which she had been so vain, waivered in tangled masses over her forehead as she buried her face in the bosom of her sister's and dearest companion. There she wept, passionately, unrestrainedly, as if they were again alone in their little room at the farm; and the big tears gushed from the closed eyelids of the fair and innocent orphan, as she bent over the long lost, still loved lamb of a forsaken fold.

"Let us go home," murmured Mary, "out of the sight of these strange people."

"Home!" said Jessie; "to my home! oh, oh, no, that is no place for you!"

"I will not leave you, Jessie," said the orphan; "never, never again, where you live is only too good for me; let us go!" and she wound her arms fondly round her sister's neck.

Through dirty narrow streets they slowly proceeded, accompanied by the soldier who had been interested by Mary's supplications, and who now supported the faint steps of the exhausted Jessie; whilst the orphan shrunk from the stare of scorn, curiosity, or wonder, which they attracted.

They reached the house at last, and the two girls crept up the dark dirty stairs into a low and ill-furnished room; and there they sat down, and Jessie told her own story from the time of her leaving her place, to the moment when Mary found her. She said she was innocent of the crime for which she had been sent away, and that she firmly believed the face had been put into her box by one of the other servants, a girl who had since been transported for a theft committed in another family. That fearing the disgrace of a trial and feeling the impossibility of proving her innocence, she had left her master's house in a state of mind approaching to delirium, and as she wandered on, she came to a bridge, and felt irresistibly prompted to throw herself from it and so die. That while in the act of jumping from the parapet, she was saved by a young man whom she afterwards discovered to be a surveyor, and who persuaded her to return with him to his mother, promising that no one should ever know where she was, till she herself wished it. That she remained with his mother for more than two months, and that the young man wished very much to marry her, but that she would neither consent to this nor tell her father's name, nor write home, till she should stand acquitted of the charge of the theft. That when she heard of the transportation of her fellow servant, she relinquished all hope of ever having her character cleared, and gave herself up to despair. That just about this time, the young man who had treated her so kindly, was killed by the fall of some old houses he was examining, and his aged and feeble parents survived his loss but eight days. That after the death of those persons she had hired this miserable lodging; and having

gone in search of employment to a distant part of the town, on her return homewards she had fallen asleep from grief and weariness, and never woke till she was roused by the person Mary had seen holding her, who persisted that she was drunk, and ordered her to get up and go away.

"During the whole of the recital, Jessie's voice was almost inarticulate from hysterical weeping; her violence of language, the bitterness with which she expressed herself against all those connected with her dismissal from service, startled and dismayed the gentle Mary. At first she strenuously refused to return to her father's house, and passionately disclaimed any wish to be received, unless they entirely believed her assertions of innocence. But when the orphan meekly reasoned on her probable fate—when she contrasted the confused shouts, the brawling, the drunken song, with which from time to time their ears were assailed, with the quiet of their own old house—when, above all, she described the utter broken heartedness of the stout farmer, the proud spirit, melted, and Jessie consented to accompany her adopted sister. A letter was written to prepare her father and mother; and late on the evening of the day, father Somers received the intelligence, the two sisters again walked together through the little lane that led to the farm house; and in a few minutes more Jessie was folded to her father's heart. Another letter had reached him on that eventful morning; it was from Jessie's master, containing the confession of her fellow servant, taken before a magistrate and duly signed; the principal purport was, that the theft had been a concerted plan, both to obtain money and cause Jessie's dismissal, of whom she was very jealous—that she had taken Jessie's bonnet, and procured curls of the description usually worn by the unhappy girl—and that she had purposely dropped the handkerchief, that no circumstance might be wanting to condemn her."

While these happy tidings were reaching Mary, scarcely felt that James' arm was thrown around her while he gazed on Jessie; but she heard and felt his audible amen, when at evening prayer that night, farmer Somers called down a fervent blessing upon "THE ORPHAN;" and the humbled and saddened Jessie, who became again (and with better cause) the cherished idol of all around her, never forgot the day when Mary sat in the dark and wretched room, earnestly beseeching her in those low-musical tones, to return, like the prodigal son, alike to be welcomed.

SHADOW OF DEATH.

We have rarely met with anything more beautiful than the following which we find in an exchange paper:

All that live must die:
"Passing through Nature to Eternity."

Men seldom think of the great event of Death, until the shadow falls across their own path, hiding forever from their own eyes the face of loved ones whose living smiles was the sunlight of their existence. Death is the great antagonist of life, and the cold thought of the tomb is the skeleton in all our feasts. We do not want to go thro' the dark valley, altho' its passage may lead to Paradise, and with Charles Lamb we do not wish to lie down in the mouldy grave, even with the kings and princes for our bed-fellows. But the fiat of Nature is inexorable. There is no equal to reprove from the great law that dooms us all to dust. We flourish and fade like the leaves of the forest, and the fairest flower that blooms and withers in a day, has not a firmer hold on life than the mightiest monarch that has ever shook the earth by his footsteps. Generations of men may appear and vanish like the grass, and the countless multitude that swarm the world in day will to-morrow disappear like the foot prints on the shore.

"Soon as the rising tide shall bear,"

"Each trace will vanish from the shore;"

In the beautiful drama of Ion, the instances of immortality so eloquently uttered by the death-devoted Greek, find a more responsive in every thoughtful soul. When about to yield his young existence as a sacrifice to Fate, his betrothed Cleonarch asks if they will not meet again, to which he replies: "I have asked that dreadful question of the hills that look eternal, of the flowing streams that flow forever; of the stars among whose folds of azure many raised spirits hail walked in glory."

Evening Lecture of Henry Jones, Concerning Newspapers.

Well Jones you are a pretty fellow—here you've come home again as drunk as a blind owl, and you don't know your self from four dollars and a half. The children are crying for bread—their clothes worn out, and here I have to slave—slave—slave—the whole blessed day, till I have not a whole rag to my back, and what there is, sticks as tight to me as the skin does to the Model Artists' old Mrs. Smith tells about.

We must retrench! Retrench, indeed! I'd like to see what you'd retrench about this house, except vitals and clothes, and I'm sure we've none to spare in them respects. You wouldn't want your own flesh and blood to go naked and hungry, would you? You're too much of a man, if you're an old brute, Jones, for that. If you'd keep to your work, and mind your own business, be steady, and stop your drinking all day and sneering all night, times would be a heap better for us. You ain't the man, Jones, you was when I give you my virgin affections; you don't come into the house and lift off your hat, and say good evening, Miss Hetty, and draw your chair close up to mine, and then take hold of my hand and kind of blub, and then hitch up a little closer, and—

Don't make a fool of yourself! I ain't a going to Jones, but it sort a does my old heart good to call up these reminiscences, and wish it had always been so. But you're as tender hearted as a turtle dove and just as sensible when you have any sense, as anybody. Set down, Jones, and tell me all the news a flying.

You've stopped the paper! You lie, Jones—you know you lie—you'd stop your wind first—you'd stop the children's bread—you'd a—

You couldn't afford it! Aint you got no conscience, Jones, to let on so? The paper costs you four cents a week, and here it is Saturday night, and I'd like to know how much money you've thrown away this week—I'll count it up—I'll give you a blessing before I get through. I aint often I ketch you at home, and when I do you'll take it for better or worse, as the saying is. 'There is a gallon of whiskey on Monday evening, costs 37 1/2 cents—there's a half gallon of beer on Tuesday, costs 18 pence—there's a shilling to treat that old flunkin' with, that come along and said he know you when you was a boy—the Lord only knows how much you've spent to day—it must have took a heap of change, for you aint no old sponge, Jones, you don't get drunk on anybody's money but your own—and I reckon it must be took at least a quarter to make a man drunk enough to stop his paper; well, now I'll go and count it all up,—three shillings, and 18 pence, and one shilling, and a quarter, makes just ninety-four cents, my opinion, as good as the very sum thrown into the fire, and better too, and that would of paid for the Olive Branch a whole year—and I expect the printer needs the money as bad as most folks. There's a power of economy in such doing—why, what would a body know if it wasn't for the paper—and now, too, when there's a great election coming, and a body wants to know how to vote.

Wimmen don't vote! Well I know it, and it's a great pity they don't. They'd revolutionize the world, and have a provisionary government every where, as they call it, and they'd—they wouldn't kill off all the men, not quite, cause they're useful in their places, but they'd make them keep their places, mind I tell you, Jones. But as I was saying about the printer, we must have printers, and if they can live without nothing to eat, then they're the critters that's in advance of the age, for the people of this generation make a god of their bellies, according to the best of their knowledge and belief. Another thing I shouldn't wonder if you stopped the paper and never paid for it, and then you'd get published in the black list, and your wife's reputation be ruined—and your children go to the penitentiary—it won't do, it won't do—and here she broke off, for Jones was asleep!

"To him who works and only him
The Past returns again."